

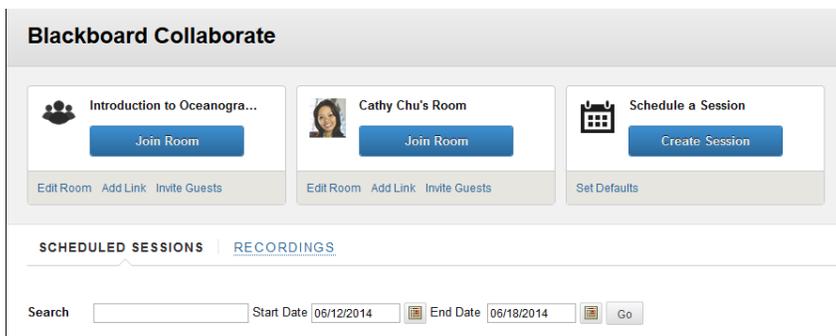
## Using Blackboard Collaborate to Facilitate Virtual Office Hours

Blackboard Collaborate can help facilitate synchronous communication in your online courses, including virtual office hours. To access the Blackboard Collaborate tools, click on Control Panel > Course Tools > Blackboard Collaborate; you can also access through the “Tools” link provided to students.

For every course, Blackboard Collaborate generates two types of rooms that require no scheduling; both rooms can be used to hold virtual office hours.

1. **The Course Room** (titled your course’s name) is a room unique to your course and lasts as long as the duration of your course. It is always available.
2. The **My Room** (titled your name) is provided for each instructor and lasts as long you have a Blackboard account. My Room is accessible from any course where you have the instructor role. My Room is a great way to provide office hours to users across ALL of your courses. If a student enters My Room and needs to speak to you privately, you can create a new session using the “Schedule a Session” function and restrict the access to ONLY that student. In addition, if you wish, you can disallow participants from a certain course to enter your room.

### Blackboard Collaborate Options

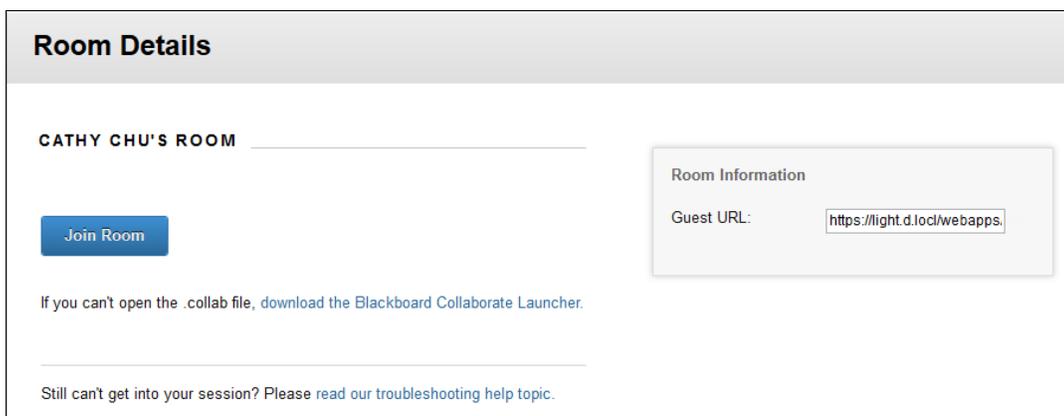


The screenshot shows the Blackboard Collaborate interface. At the top, there are three main options: "Introduction to Oceanogra...", "Cathy Chu's Room", and "Schedule a Session". Each option has a "Join Room" button, except for "Schedule a Session" which has a "Create Session" button. Below these options are tabs for "SCHEDULED SESSIONS" and "RECORDINGS". At the bottom, there is a search bar and a date filter with "Start Date" set to 06/12/2014 and "End Date" set to 06/18/2014.

### To Open / Launch Your Virtual Office Hours

After you decide which room you want to use for office hours (make sure to communicate this to students), click “Join Room” to enter a room. **You will need to do this every day you wish to hold office hours.** On the Room Details page, click “Join Room” again to initiate Blackboard Collaborate.

### Blackboard My Room Details Example



The screenshot shows the "Room Details" page for "CATHY CHU'S ROOM". There is a "Join Room" button. Below it, there is a link: "If you can't open the .collab file, download the Blackboard Collaborate Launcher." To the right, there is a "Room Information" box with a "Guest URL:" field containing the URL "https://light.d.iocl/webapps.". At the bottom, there is a link: "Still can't get into your session? Please read our troubleshooting help topic."

## **Blackboard Collaborate Launcher**

A note from the folks at Blackboard: “The Blackboard Collaborate Launcher is a utility for Windows and Mac that provides a convenient and reliable way for you to launch your Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing sessions and recordings. The launcher uses a .collab file to launch Blackboard Collaborate, using a known and stable version of Java. Because the launcher includes the required Java, you do not need to install and maintain the system version of Java.”

I will sum this up in a nutshell. If you are on a Mac, you will likely have to download the launcher because of JAVA issues. PC users might be okay without it- or they might have to download the utility.

## **Create a New Session - How to Have a Private Conversation with Students**

You can create individual sessions to address student questions and concerns. If a student asks a question in the My Room area and you decide that the issue should be addressed privately, all you need to do is create a new session.

1. Click on “Create Session.”
2. Click on “Roles and Access” (at the very bottom of the screen).
3. Check “Restrict Access to this Session.” After doing so, click on the “Add Participants” box. Find the student you wish to converse privately with.

## **A couple other points worth noting...**

### **Edit Settings**

You can customize any of your rooms. Click “Edit Room” to adjust settings for simultaneous speakers, private messages, the recording options, and more. I encourage you to play around with these options.

### **Allow Guests**

You can send guests a URL to access your Blackboard Collaborate session. This is a great way to facilitate guest speakers in your courses.

### **Search Sessions and Recordings**

Note you have the ability to record sessions.

### **Search Sessions – Other**

You can also use the schedule a session function to facilitate synchronous classes. You can set the session to start and stop at designated times, and repeat at regular intervals. For example, you might host a session every Monday at a set time where you introduce a new chapter and objectives for the week. The start time you provide must fall in 15-minute increments, such as 0, 15, 30, and 45.

This handout is based on information provided by Blackboard. For step-by-step instructions, go to [https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1/SP\\_12\\_and\\_SP\\_13/Instructor/060\\_Course\\_Tools/Blackboard\\_Collaborate\\_Building\\_Block/010\\_Blackboard\\_Collaborate\\_Sessions](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1/SP_12_and_SP_13/Instructor/060_Course_Tools/Blackboard_Collaborate_Building_Block/010_Blackboard_Collaborate_Sessions)